

## University of Tartu, Victorious case study (13.03.2007)

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### I Overview

The University of Tartu has 11 faculties, 3 research institutes and 7 colleges with more than 70 departments, institutes and clinics. Five of the colleges were established as a part of the university's regional development programme since 1996 and are situated out of Tartu in Tallinn (capital in the north), Pärnu (on west coast), Narva (on eastern border), Türi and Viljandi (in mid-Estonia). The total number of students is more than 18 000 with a teaching staff of 1368. The total number of staff is 2941. The University's 375 life-span has included different periods. Established by Swedish king, it has also been German, Russian and now is Estonian university.

UT is an internationally recognized research university bringing together a variety of research areas. As befits a classical *universitas* worthy of its name, research is conducted in many different fields, among which the six Estonian Centres of Excellence affiliated with UT deserve special mention:

- Centre for Basic and Applied Ecology
- Institute of Physics (also a Centre of Excellence of the European Commission)
- Centre of Excellence for Gene and Environmental Technologies
- Centre for Excellence for Chemistry and Material Science
- Centre for Behavioural and Health Sciences
- Centre for Molecular and Clinical Medicine (also a Centre of Excellence of the European Commission).

Ca 2/3 of all PhD degrees in Estonia are defended in UT (88 in 2004). UT researchers are involved in writing more than 50% of Estonia's ISI-indexed scientific articles (496 in 2004). Altogether over 3800 publications are published annually.

In all fields of activity the University seeks to maintain the highest standards, paying much attention to developing collaboration and international contact.

In the end of 2004 University adopted its Internationalisation strategy (<http://www.ut.ee/iroeng/general/strat>) that besides other aims stresses raising the quality of teaching through internationalization:

- To analyse the comparability of UT's curricula with respect to the curricula of universities internationally, and to develop the international dimension in UT's curricula.
- To establish opportunities for study in foreign languages in UT's master's degree programmes.
- To prioritise the establishment of joint degrees with universities abroad, in developing foreign language curricula.
- To increase the mobility of UT students primarily on the master's and doctoral levels, and to aim at a portion of doctoral study spent abroad in foreign universities.
- To increase international cooperation in the supervision of doctoral dissertations.

Among the student body there are ca 2568 students working on their Master's and 1011 on their Doctoral thesis. Nearly 5000 students are pursuing their studies at the Open University. Open University is a trademark of the University of Tartu for flexible and non-traditional study opportunities. Besides adult students oriented degree programmes Open University offers also more than 800 continuing education courses for ca 15000 learners. UT Summer school recruits about 100 international students, about 15% of regular international enrollment at UT, and they spend 2-3 weeks at UT in the summer e.

From autumn 2002 the University went over to the new 3+2 programme of study and underwent a curricular reform. The change was based on the 1999 Bologna declaration signed by the European Ministers of Education with the aim of creating a unified European higher education area and providing better conditions for student mobility.

The online Studies Information Database (ÕIS) was launched in 2002 comprising data on admission, timetables, registration for subjects and examination, study results, scholarships and grants, and studentship. ÕIS helps get a better view of all studies-related data; the students can sign up for courses and learn about their results electronically.

Since 1998 UT has actively engaged in developing e-learning opportunities both in web and in video. Currently ca 350 out of 4000 UT courses are web-based (in WebCT environment) and there are ca 3500 students participating in web-based courses. UT was one of the initiating and founding members of the Estonian e-University ([www.e-uni.ee](http://www.e-uni.ee)) in 2002 that currently includes 10 member-institutions and coordinates majority of Estonian higher education level e-learning initiatives. In December 2005, Tartu University adopted its first e-learning strategy.

## **II Exchange students incoming**

In 2006 there were 338 exchange students at Tartu University (total number of international students at the same time 461), out of which 179 ERASMUS students. While majority of students who study for the whole degree come from Finland, the biggest numbers of exchange students are from Germany, USA, Russia, Poland, Italy and also Finland. The number of incoming exchange students have been slightly increasing during last years, the share of Erasmus students being around 50%. In 2004/2005 55-57% of all international students at UT were women.

### Language of instruction

57% of the total number of international students and 81% of international degree students at UT in 2005 studied in Estonian. Among non-degree international students the proportions are reversed, with 65% of them studying in English.

Language of instruction	Exchange students		Degree students		Total UT	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
English	96	65%	49	18%	145	35%
Estonian	18	12%	215	81%	233	57%
Finnish*	21	14%	0	0%	21	5%
Russian*	14	9%	0	0%	14	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Mostly includes students in intensive language studies (Source: International Students Office, UT)

### Field and level of study of international students

Great majority of exchange students study at the Faculty of Philosophy and Faculty of Social Sciences. Undergraduate level students constitute 74-77% of all international students studying at UT (total includes both degree and visiting students), 4-5% are Master level students and 6% are doctoral.

### III Exchange students, outgoing

In 2006 419 UT students studied at least one semester in abroad, 227 of them within ERASMUS contracts. The top destinations are Germany, Finland, France, Spain and Italy. The number of outgoing students have been quite quickly increasing over last years (e.g. 2004 was the number of outgoing students 260).

### IV Services for exchange students

The web-site for international students includes all necessary information for incoming students before their arrival. There is, however, only short information about Studies Information Database (ÕIS). The database provides updated information on admission process, courses and study programmes available at the University, it enables students to see the timetables, register to courses and examinations and to keep an eye on their academic progress. The part of the database, that holds information on courses and study programmes, is also available in English, there is no need to have a username and a password to access this part of the database.

There is no information about library data-bases, e-mail accounts, e-learning opportunities etc. This is given to students upon their arrival and registration. The most important event for incoming students when already in Tartu is orientation week. During this they get introduction for using Studies Information Data-base, there is excursion in library that includes introduction to data-bases, introduction how to become a user of Tartu University's computer network, information about Internet access in dormitories, university campuses and Public Access Internet Points.

The difference with local students is that the latter are immatriculated before their arrival and therefore they get access to all the resources immediately. Exchange students are registered upon their arrival that is a bureaucratic process that might take several days. It means that they might get access to all data-bases (including also web-based registration to courses) only after one week.

The services for all students are as follows:

- All students receive a username and password that is necessary for the services in Tartu University computer network: to read e-mails, to log in to computers in University computer labs, to register to subjects and to see the study results using Studies Information Database
- Studies Information Database: information about all curricula, one's personalised curriculum, registering to courses, getting courses material, evaluating courses, seeing study results. Main parts for students are translated into English.
- Library catalogue and electronic data-bases. Available in English.
- Web-based courses in WebCT. This has got a different password and is currently not linked to the Studies Information Database. WebCT guide is provided also in English and the environment itself is in English.
- Helpdesk that provides help with the computer problems by e-mail [ak.abi@ut.ee](mailto:ak.abi@ut.ee), by phone 7375 500 or from the FAQ page <http://www.ut.ee/iteng/helpdesk/faq>.

After leaving the university the account is closed within few weeks.

Outgoing students maintain all their rights to use UT resources while abroad. UT offers web-based e-mail reading opportunity (web-mail) for mobile students and teachers and all university data-bases/information-systems are offered with single password over the web. For using electronic library data-bases VPN is needed.

### **Transcript**

At the end of a term one receives an official document from the dean's office, with credits and grades, to be taken to your university - Transcript of Academic Records. The Transcripts are issued by the dean's office a student is immatriculated to. The Transcripts will not be sent by post unless student asks for that. Currently it is done only on paper.

### **Quality**

The main tool for HE quality assurance in Estonia is accreditation. An institution of higher education and its curricula are accredited by the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council, which is appointed by the Government of the Republic and which operates under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. Accreditation of curricula takes place after every 7 years. It is an exercise during which a commission consisting of international experts assesses and decides whether particular curriculum meets the requirements laid out in relevant legislative and regulatory documents. State recognition is granted to documents certifying the acquisition of a higher education based on an accredited curriculum. For accreditation a self-evaluation report is compiled.

There are several tools for continuous internal quality assurance. Evaluation of courses and teaching is done by students in the end of each course in Study Information Database and it is compulsory for students. The results are used by teachers themselves, by the heads of departments and deans, for appointing the best teachers of the year, in accreditation, and it can be used during elections. The questionnaire is available also in English. There is a special questionnaire for evaluation of web-based courses. There are regular courses offered to university teachers about different aspects of teaching, however this is not compulsory except for PhD students who have to take at least 6 ECTS credit point teaching methods.

In all University representative bodies (University Council, University Government, Faculty Councils) there are at least 20% of students. Exchange students cannot be, however elected there while they are not elected to Students' Representation (Üliõpilasesindus)

## **VI University policy regarding exchange students**

Internationalisation is one of 5 strategic aims of the UT as stated in the University of Tartu Strategic Plan 2008 (A2008) adopted in 2003. "The University of Tartu shall be an international research university. Only with a strong international competitive edge in research and tuition can we secure the sustainable development of the university in the European research and higher education area, fostered by the participation of the university academic staff in international networks of co-operation. The University of Tartu shall establish new interdisciplinary centres of excellence and shall increase the number of research publications. At the same time, the university shall implement curricula in foreign languages and increase the number of both foreign academic staff and students."

Fifth aim in the same strategic plan is **improving the quality of teaching and learning**: "The University of Tartu shall guarantee a high level of tuition in all study forms; shall implement a complex quality control system, shall elaborate new, well-prepared courses, shall continuously update the contents of study materials, shall improve the learning environment and implement modern teaching and learning methods. The university shall target new groups by creating flexible study opportunities for the international student body as well as for students of further education both in the traditional and new forms of tuition."

Internationalisation strategy, mentioned also above, turns special attention also to the quality of services university offers to international staff and students. Aiming to create a supportive environment for internationalization, the following activities are mentioned:

- To aim at announcing all academic job vacancies internationally; to establish a requirement for academic experience abroad in filling academic positions.
- To advertise doctoral positions through international channels.
- To ensure support in the university's various structural units for the admission of and practical assistance for international lecturers, researchers and students, including increased opportunities for learning Estonian.